

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING EXCERPTS ON THE
PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND SAN JOSE OAS MEETING

FOLLOWING EXCHANGES TOOK PLACE AT DEPARTMENT BRIEFING
JULY 10:

PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS:

Q: IN VIEW OF THE VOTE, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY VOTE
IN THE HOUSE IN SUPPORT OF THE SNYDER AMENDMENT, I AM
JUST WONDERING, WHAT IS THE REACTION OF THE STATE DEPART-
MENT, AND DO YOU INTEND TO CONTINUE THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT
THEY SEEM TO OPPOSE VERY STRONGLY?

A: YES, WE DO. THE ADMINISTRATION INTENDS TO CONTINUE WITH
THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA ON THE CANAL.

Q: I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU COULD -- SINCE THE SENATE
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HAS A SIMILAR RESOLUTION THAT HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY MORE

THAN THE ONE-THIRD NECESSARY TO BLOCK ANY SUCH TREATY, AND THE HOUSE HAS SPOKEN IN A MAJORITY, I JUST AM WONDERING IF YOU COULD GIVE ME SOME HINT AS TO THE RATIONALE FOR THIS-

A: THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS IT IS IN THE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES TO CONTINUE THESE NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA.

Q: EVEN IF THE CONGRESS FEELS THAT IT IS NOT IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

A: THE SENATE IS THE BODY IN THE END THAT HAS AUTHORITY UNDER THE CONSTITUTION ON GIVING ITS ADVICE AND CONSENT ON TREATIES. THE ADMINISTRATION IS IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE CONGRESS NOW, DURING THIS PERIOD OF NEGOTIATION, AND AT THE CONCLUSION OF WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION, IT WILL BE IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE CONGRESS AT THAT TIME AS WELL.

Q: ONE LAST FOLLOW-UP ON THIS--IS THAT IN ORDER?

A: SURELY.

Q: AND IF THE 37 SENATORS WHO HAVE SIGNED THIS STRONGLY-WORDED RESOLUTION, SIMILAR TO THAT IN THE HOUSE, HOLD TO IT, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE EFFECT TO PANAMA AFTER ALL THESE NEGOTIATIONS -- I UNDERSTAND THEY HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR YEARS. AND YOU SIGN -- I MEAN -- YOU COME UP WITH A TREATY AND THEY TURN IT DOWN. WOULDN'T THAT EVENTUALLY BE MORE DETRIMENTAL TO RELATIONS?

A: WE HOPE AND BELIEVE THAT THE KIND OF NEGOTIATION THAT WE WILL CONCLUDE WILL MEET THE APPROVAL OF THE SENATE.

Q: AND IF IT DOESN'T --

A: THAT IS AN "IFFY" QUESTION. WE WILL CROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN WE COME TO IT.

Q: OKAY. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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Q: IS THERE A LEGAL OPINION AVAILABLE HERE ON WHETHER FINAL APPROVAL OF THE SNYDER AMENDMENT WOULD IN FACT PRECLUDE FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS? THE LANGUAGE WAS KIND OF AMBIGUOUS, TO SOME PEOPLE, ANYWAY.

A: I DON'T KNOW THAT ANY FINAL OPINION HAS BEEN REACHED. THE ADMINISTRATION OBVIOUSLY IS OPPOSED TO ANY CONGRESSIONAL ACTION THAT PREVENTS IT FROM CARRYING OUT ITS

EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITY UNDER THE CONSTITUTION TO
NEGOTIATE TREATIES. AND THE CONGRESS KNOWS THAT THIS IS
OUR POSITION.

Q: ARE YOU SAYING IT IS ILLEGAL, WHAT THE CONGRESS IS
TRYING TO DO?

A: I WILL JUST STAND WITH WHAT I SAID.

SAN JOSE OAS MEETING:

Q: THE COSTA RICA MEETING OPENS NEXT WEEK. IF THE
SUBJECT ARISES, WOULD THE UNITED STATES SUPPORT A PROPOSAL
WHICH PERMITS EACH OAS MEMBER FREEDOM OF ACTION IN PURSU-
ING ANY KIND OF RELATIONS IT DESIRES WITH CUBA?

A: WITHOUT ANSWERING SPECIFICALLY YOUR QUESTION, I WOULD
JUST RECALL THAT THE SECRETARY AT THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD GO TO COSTA RICA WITH
THE IDEA THAT WE REACH SOME SORT OF A SUCCESSFUL AGREEMENT
WITH OUR ALLIES IN THE OAS ON THE CUBAN SANCTIONS QUES-
TION. INGERSOLL

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